



Knowledge of the Unseen¹ *Imām al-Nawawī*

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Question:

What is the meaning of the verse: ***‘Say, nobody in the heavens or the earth knows of the unseen except Allāh’***² and the saying of the Prophet ﷺ: ‘Nobody knows what will happen on the morrow, except Allah’ and similar statements found in both the Qur’ān and the Ḥadīth even though it has occurred from the miracles of Prophets – may Allāh bless them all and give them peace – and the miracles of saints that they imparted ‘knowledge of the morrow’ (*mā fī ghadd*)

Answer:

The [correct] meaning is nobody knows absolutely (*istiqlālan*). And [nobody has] such absolute knowledge that is complete and all-encompassing except Allāh *ta’ālā*.

As for the miracles of prophets and saints, then it is by the informing of Allāh *ta’ālā*, not independently by themselves. And this is – as we know – the sun rises and stays for six hours and then begins to wane; and then stays for another six and it sets; and then remains so for the next twelve hours and then rises again. Similar [prediction] can be made about the moon and other such event which are actually ‘news about the future.’

This knowledge of unseen did not come to us independently, but rather by the informing of Allāh *ta’ālā* through the constancy of such things [following the laws made by Him].



¹ Fatāwa Imām al-Nawawī, pg.173.

² Qur’ān: Al-Naḥl, v.65

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